

don't you take her into NATO and make it all one big, happy family?

The President. First of all, I have never left Russia out. I have explicitly said in every speech that I have made about this subject that I do not believe Russia should be excluded from NATO membership. I'm not sure that Russia would not prefer a special charter between Russia and NATO; that's what we're trying to achieve now. But I would be the last person to try to exclude them. I don't believe anybody should be excluded.

Q. Do you think she would join?

The President. I don't know. As I said, it's my belief that at this moment in time, Russia would prefer to have a charter setting out a relationship between NATO and Russia. But I would never exclude them from membership.

Look, I am trying to build a world for our children and grandchildren that will not repeat the worst of the 20th century and will take advantage of the best that the future offers.

Q. That's my point, that the two World Wars were started by nations being isolated, Versailles, Yalta, and so forth.

The President. That's why we've tried to get—right now, it's so hard to have a special charter between Russia and NATO, that's why we have made it clear that NATO is not an aggressive organization trying to limit, restrict, or undermine anyone who wants to treat their neighbors with respect and work in concert the way Russia and NATO and the United States particularly are working together in Bosnia.

I'll see you in Helsinki.

The Vice President. Mr. President, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International] played Madeleine at the Gridiron, and I think she's still in the role. [Laughter]

The President. Just come get on the plane. Believe me, I missed you, and I missed him, and I'm really sorry I missed you both.

Q. He was fabulous.

The President. I ought to—

Q. And you did pretty good.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:49 p.m. in the Red Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yevgeniy Primakov of Russia.

Letter to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich on Proposed Compensatory Time Legislation

March 19, 1997

Dear Mr. Speaker:

America's working families find it increasingly difficult to balance the demands of work and family. Our nation's workers and their employers deserve responsible compensatory time legislation that gives working people the flexibility they need to meet their obligations at home and in the workplace, while upholding three fundamental principles: real choice for employees, real protection against employer abuse, and preservation of fair labor standards such as the 40 hour work week and the right to overtime pay.

The legislation currently pending House consideration, H.R. 1, the Working Families Flexibility Act of 1997, does not meet these principles. As a result, I strongly oppose H.R. 1 and will veto this bill if passed in its current form.

We should enact comp time legislation this year that meets the needs of working families and U.S. businesses. Last year, I proposed employee-choice flex-time legislation and included expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) so that workers could take leave for parent-teacher conferences or attend to the routine medical needs of their families. With these objectives in mind, I encourage you to support a substitute amendment to be offered by Representative George Miller. Unlike H.R. 1, the Miller amendment allows comp time without endangering fair labor standards, and without burdening business with greater costs or risks.

It is time for us to work together to give America's working families the help they need to succeed in an increasingly demanding environment. Although I am prepared to support and sign a responsible comp time bill, I intend

to veto any legislation that fails to guarantee real choice for employees, real protection against employer abuse, and preservation of fair labor standards such as the 40 hour work week and the right to overtime pay. To that end, I hope

that you can support the Miller amendment—a good step toward responsible comp time reform.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Environmental Quality *March 19, 1997*

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress the Twenty-fifth Annual Report on Environmental Quality.

As a nation, the most important thing we can do as we move into the 21st century is to give all our children the chance to live up to their God-given potential and live out their dreams. In order to do that, we must offer more opportunity and demand more responsibility from all our citizens. We must help young people get the education and training they need, make our streets safer from crime, help Americans succeed at home and at work, protect our environment for generations to come, and ensure that America remains the strongest force for peace and freedom in the world. Most of all, we must come together as one community to meet our challenges.

Our Nation's leaders understood this a quarter-century ago when they launched the modern era of environmental protection with the National Environmental Policy Act. NEPA's authors understood that environmental protection,

economic opportunity, and social responsibility are interrelated. NEPA determined that the Federal Government should work in concert with State and local governments and citizens "to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans."

We've made great progress in 25 years as we've sought to live up to that challenge. As we look forward to the next 25 years of environmental progress, we do so with a renewed determination. Maintaining and enhancing our environment, passing on a clean world to future generations, is a sacred obligation of citizenship. We all have an interest in clean air, pure water, safe food, and protected national treasures. Our environment is, literally, our common ground.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
March 19, 1997.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Budget Rescission *March 19, 1997*

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974, I herewith report one proposed rescission of budgetary resources, totaling \$10 million.

The proposed rescission affects the Department of Energy.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

March 19, 1997.

NOTE: The report detailing the proposed rescission was published in the *Federal Register* on March 26.